

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4752

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, ENRG, LA

SUBJ: GOVERNMENT SPOKESMEN DISCUSSES JULY 9 CABINET

MEETING AND PRESS COVERAGE OF LAOS

SUMMARY: LAO GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN AT JULY 10 PRESS CONFERENCE
DISCUSSED WHAT WAS EVIDENTLY INCONSEQUENTIAL CABINET MEETING
THE DAY BEFORE AND ONCE AGAIN COMPLAINED ABOUT FOREIGN MEDIA
COVERAGE OF DEVELOPMENTS IN LAOS. END SUMMARY.

1. AT HIS REGULAR WEEKLY PRESS CONFERENCE JULY 10, LAO GOV-
ERNMENT (PGNU) SPOKESMAN OUDAY SOUVANNAVONG REITERATED HIS
PLEA TO FOREIGN JOURNALISTS THAT THEY "PLEASE" (IN ENGLISH)
REPORT "THE TRUTH" ABOUT LAOS. HE REFERRED TO REPORTS
CARRIED RECENTLY IN BANGKOK WHICH CITED "A" LAO GOVERNMENT
SPOKESMAN AS SAYING THAT FOREIGN MINISTER PHOUMI VONGVICHIT
WOULD CONVALESCENCE IN BANGKOK, WHEREAS AT LAST WEEK'S PRESS
CONFERENCE OUDAY HAD SAID MERELY THAT PHOUMI WOULD SEEK MEDICAL
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TREATMENT "ABROAD." OUDAY SAID THIS KIND OF REPORTING

COULD CREATE MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND HARM LAOS. HE ADDED THAT DISPATCHES REFERRING TO "A"PGNU SPOKESMAN WERE INACCURATE SINCE THERE IS ONLY "THE" GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN, I.E., HIMSELF. (COMMENT: THE ERRONEOUS DISPATCH ABOUT PHOUMI'S GOING TO BANGKOK CAME FROM UPI CORRESPONDENT PAUL VOGLE, WHO CONFESSES THAT HE SIMPLY MISUNDERSTOOD OUDAY. OUDAY'S REMARKS THIS WEEK ARE PERHAPS INNOCUOUS ON THE SURFACE BUT THEY COULD

PRESAGE AN EVENTUAL TIGHTENING OF THE SCREWS ON FOREIGN PRESS, ESPECIALLY NOW THAT ALL LOCAL PAPERS -- INCLUDING THE FORMERLY RIGHT-LEANING AND PRO-VIENTIANE SIDE DAILY XAT LAO -- ARE ENTHUSIACTICALLY SPOUTING THE LAO PATRIOTIC FRONT'S LINE.)

2. OUDAY SAID CABINET MET JULY 9 WITH PRIME MINISTER SOUVANNA PHOUMA PRESIDING AND DISCUSSED FOLLOWING MATTERS:

3. DEPARTURE OF JUSTICE MINISTER: CABINET AGREED TO ACCEPT RESIGNATION OF JUSTICE MINISTER KHAMKING SOUVANLASI, WHO WENT TO BANGKOK IN LATE JUNE TO BE WITH HIS SICK WIFE. CABINET ALSO GRANTED KHAMKING'S REQUEST FOR ONE YEAR'S LEAVE OF ABSENCE WITHOUT PAY FROM FOREIGN MINISTRY, HIS PARENT AGENCY. (COMMENT: KHAMKING WAS A MODERATE VIENTIANE-SIDE FIGURE AND TECHNICALLY A NEUTRALIST IN THE CABINET; NON-COMMUNIST LAO ARE INTERPRETING HIS DEPARTURE AS AN OMINOUS HARBINGER OF THINGS TO COME. YOUNGER MODERATES SEEM TO LOOK TO CHANSAMONE VORAGONG, LEADER OF THE VITIATED YOUNG IDEAS PARTY, AS OLDER MODERATES LOOKED TO KHAMKING. SEVERAL OF OUR CONTACTS BELIEVE IT WILL BE ONLY A MATTER OF WEEKS BEFORE CHANSAMONE TOO WILL BE FORCED TO LEAVE.) OUDAY ADDED THAT QUESTION OF A REPLACEMENT FOR KHAMKING IS STILL BEING CONSIDERED. OFFICIAL LAO PRESSE ADDED THAT BOTH SIDES (SIC) WILL CONSULT "INCESSANTLY" IN AN EFFORT TO SELECT A NEW MINISTER OF JUSTICE.

4. UNEMPLOYMENT: NOTING THAT THERE ARE MANY UNEMPLOYED PERSONS OF BOTH SEXES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OUDAY SAID MINISTRY OF INTERIOR HAD BEEN DIRECTED TO SURVEY THE UNEMPLOYED TO DETERMINE EXTENT OF PROBLEM. IT WILL THEN TRY TO ESTABLISH A PROGRAM TO PROVIDE WORK FOR THESE PEOPLE.

5. DISPENSARIES: CABINET APPROVED A PROPOSAL BY MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH TO SET UP DISPENSARIES IN ALL MINISTRIES TO SERVE GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES AND THEIR

FAMILIES. MINISTRY WILL PROVIDE FREE MEDICINES,
AND NURSES WILL BE ASSIGNED ON RATION OF ONE FOR EVERY
60 CIVIL SERVANTS.

6. COAL VERSUS CHARCOAL: CABINET DIRECTED MINISTRY OF
ECONOMY TO PROMOTE USE OF COAL INSTEAD OF CHARCOAL.
OUDAY NOTED THAT CHARCOAL IS EXPENSIVE AND THAT ITS
PRODUCTION DEplete LAO TIMBER RESOURCES. HE SAID
MINECON WILL FIRST IMPORT COAL (ORIGIN NOT STATED)
TO VIENTIANE AND AS INTRODUCTORY MEASURE DISTRIBUTE
IT FREE OF CHARGE; ONCE PUBLIC IS ACCUSTOMED TO USING
IT, COAL WILL BE SOLD.

7. OUDAY ANNOUNCED THAT ANNUAL THAT LUANG FAIR WILL
BE HELD FROM NOVEMBER 4 TO 18 THIS YEAR.

8. OFFICIAL LAO PRESSE IN JULY 10 EDITION ADDED THAT
CABINET HAD ORDERED MINISTER OF INTERIOR TO TAKE
NECESSARY STEPS TO ENSURE THAT PROVINCE AND DISTRICT
OKHIEFS AND MEMBERS OF POLITICAL COUNCILS AT PROVINCE,
DISTRICT, COUNTY AND VILLAGE LEVELS ARE ALL APPOINTED
OR ELECTED IN CONFORMITY WITH POINT 4 OF PGNU'S
18-POINT POLITICAL PROGRAM.
CHAPMAN

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